

## Message Text

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70

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4200

INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY MEXICO CITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIS, PLOS, PFOR, EC

SUBJECT: PUBLICITY ON DETENTION OF US FISHING BOATS

1. QUITO NEWS SOURCES (RADIO, TV, NEWSPAPERS) HAVE MADE NO EFFORT TO INFLAME PUBLIC OPINION OVER THE DETENTION AND FINING OF FOUR US FISHING BOATS CAUGHT WITHOUT LICENSES IN ECUADOREAN-CLAIMED WATERS SATURDAY MORNING, JANUARY 25TH. REPORTING HAS BEEN STRAIGHT AND FACTUAL, WITH A MINIMUM OF WAVING THE BLOODY FLAG, EXCEPT FOR OCCASIONAL (AND BY NOW TRADITIONAL) REFERENCES TO "PIRATE" TUNA BOATS. SUNDAY'S QUITO HEADLINES RAN "NAVY CAPTURES FOUR US TUNA BOATS" (EL COMERCIO) AND "FOUR US FISHING BOATS CAPTURED NEAR SALINAS" (EL TIEMPO). (WE HAVE HEARD OF A FIFTH US BOAT WHICH WAS HALTED BUT RELEASED AFTER PRESENTING APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTS. HOWEVER, THIS HAS NOT BEEN DEFINITELY ESTABLISHED, AND WAS NOT REPORTED IN THE PRESS.)

2. JANUARY 27TH PAPERS (MONDAY) PROVIDED THE FIRST DETAILS OF THE DETENTION, STILL WITH AS LITTLE RHETORIC AS POSSIBLE CONSIDERING THE BACKGROUND OF THE ISSUE. ALL PAPERS NOTED THAT THESE WERE THE FIRST SHIPS TO BE DETAINED AND FINED IN TWO YEARS, AND SAID THAT THEY WERE FISHING

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WITHOUT LICENSES FORTY MILES OFFSHORE IN WATERS THAT THE

ECUADOREAN GOVERNMENT HAD PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED AS AN EXCLUSIVE ZONE FOR HER OWN FISHING INDUSTRY. (FACTS THAT AS WE KNOW THEM ARE THAT BOATS WERE ABOUT 120 MILES OFF SHORE.) IT WAS NOTED THAT THE DETENTION OF THE FOUR BOATS WAS CARRIED OUT BY A GROUP OF SHIPS FROM THE ECUADOREAN NAVY. THE SHIPS WERE ON A TRAINING CRUISE WITH A NUMBER OF MISHIPMEN FROM THE ECUADOREAN NAVAL ACADEMY ABOARD, SUPPORTED BY A HELICOPTER; THE HELICOPTER SPOTTED THE BOATS INSIDE ECUADOREAN WATERS AND THE NAVY SHIPS WENT TO INVESTIGATE. WHEN NO LICENSES WERE FOUND, THE NAVY COMMANDER RADIOED FOR INSTRUCTIONS, WHICH WERE TO BRING THE BOATS IN TO SALINAS. FINES ARE EXPECTED TO BE LEVIED TODAY, AND THERE SHOULD BE NO FURTHER IMPEDIMENT TO THEIR DEPARTURE.

3. WIDESPREAD PUBLICITY HAS BEEN GIVEN IN NEWSPAPERS HERE TO REMARKS MADE BY AUGUST FELANDO, SPOKESMAN FOR THE AMERICAN TUNA BOAT OWNERS' ASSOCIATION, TO THE EFFECT THAT THE FINES WERE REIMBURSABLE BY THE US GOVERNMENT, AND THEREFORE THAT THE TUNA FISHERMEN WERE NOT TOO WORRIED. FINES, HE IS QUOTED AS SAYING, ARE DEDUCTIBLE FROM THE AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE GIVEN BY THE USG TO ECUADOR, AND ALTHOUGH IN THE PAST THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS RECOMMENDED THAT THIS SANCTION NOT BE APPLIED, THE AMERICAN TUNA BOAT OWNERS' ASSOCIATION HOPES THAT PRESIDENT FORD WILL BE FIRMER. EL TIEMPO OF JAN 27 HAS A SUB-STORY, DATED SAN DIEGO, DESCRIBING THE SAN DIEGO TUNA BOAT OWNERS' ASSOCIATION (FELANDO, AGAIN) AS BLAMING WASHINGTON FOR THE SEIZURE OF ITS BOATS BY NOT STAUNCHLY OPPOSING ECUADOR IN DEFENSE OF THE 12 MILE ZONE WHICH SAN DIEGO FISHERMEN SUPPORT. FELANDO WAS PORTRAYED AS SHRUGGING OFF THE AMOUNT OF THE FINES OR LICENSING REQUIREMENTS SINCE THE USG REIMBURSES THE FISHING BOAT CAPTAINS UNDER PROVISIONS OF THE FISHERMEN'S PROTECTIVE ACT, THE IMPLICATION BEING "IT'S NOT UP TO US TO BUY LICENSES, SINCE THE USG WILL MAKE IT UP TO US ANYWAY".

4. THERE HAS BEEN NO EDITORIAL COMMENT SINCE THE DETENTIONS BEGAN. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE GOE HAS NO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DESIRE TO WORK UP PUBLIC OPINION, BUT SIMPLY INTENDS TO ENFORCE LAWS ON THE BOOKS. THERE WAS ONE EDITORIAL, HOWEVER, BEFORE THE SATURDAY DETENTIONS (COMERCIO OF JAN 24TH) WHICH, OUT OF THE CLEAR BLUE SKY, SAID IT HAD BEEN DEFINITELY ESTABLISHED THAT THERE WERE FOREIGN BOATS WITHIN ECUADOREAN CLAIMED WATERS FISHING WITHOUT LICENSES, AND WHY DIDN'T THE NAVY DO SOMETHING? SINCE IT WOULD HAVE BEEN HIGHLY UNUSUAL FOR COMERCIO TO PUBLISH SOMETHING

LIKE THIS ON THEIR OWN, WE SURMISE THAT THEY WERE PUT UP  
TO IT, AS A FORETASTE OF PLANNED ACTION. PROMINENCE  
WHICH NEWS ARTICLES HAVE GIVEN SAN DIEGO SPOKESMAN  
FELANDO'S REMARKS SUGGESTS THAT GOE IS WELL AWARE THAT  
US TUNA INDUSTRY'S ATTITUDE IS ONE OF INDIFFERENCE  
TO BOTH GOE LAWS AS WELL AS ECONOMIC PENALTIES OF THE  
FINES, ON GROUNDS THAT USG PROVIDES FULL REIMBURSEMENT  
UNDER PROVISIONS OF FISHERMEN'S PROTECTIVE ACT.  
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